



FACT SHEET ***Joyner v. Forsyth County***

ABOUT Joyner v. Forsyth County

In March 2007, attorneys with the American Civil Liberties Union and Americans United for Separation of Church and State sued the Forsyth County Board of Commissioners in federal court to keep prayer out of its public meetings. The two secularist groups filed the lawsuit on behalf of three individuals because the board—represented by the Alliance Defense Fund—“does not have a policy which discourages or prohibits those whom [the board] has invited to deliver prayers from including references to Jesus Christ, or any other sectarian deity, as part of their prayers.”

CURRENT STATUS OF Joyner v. Forsyth County AS OF 5/11/11

In January 2010, the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of North Carolina issued an order agreeing with a federal magistrate’s recommendation to rule against Forsyth County, despite arguments made against the recommendation filed by ADF attorneys and its allies. After a public meeting the following month that attracted nearly 1,000 county residents in support of continuing the case, the board of commissioners voted in favor of filing the appeal (which ADF filed on its behalf) with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit. ADF-allied attorney Mike Johnson, former ADF senior legal counsel and now founding dean of the Pressler School of Law of Louisiana College, is scheduled to argue before the 4th Circuit May 12 on behalf of the county board, with ADF Senior Counsel Brett Harvey also attending the hearing.

FOCUS OF HEARING – WHAT IS AT STAKE?

The hearing will determine whether lawsuits brought by secularist groups on behalf of offended outside observers can be used to abolish the centuries-old American tradition of holding prayers that mention a particular deity before public meetings.

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ABOUT ADF

ADF is a legal alliance of Christian attorneys and like-minded organizations defending the right of people to freely live out their faith. Launched in 1994, ADF employs a unique combination of strategy, training, funding, and litigation to protect and preserve religious liberty, the sanctity of life, marriage, and the family.

ABOUT Mike Johnson

Mike Johnson is one of more than 2,000 attorneys in the ADF alliance and is the founding dean of the Pressler School of Law of Louisiana College. He served as senior legal counsel with ADF from 2002 to 2010, during which time he litigated and won numerous high-profile religious liberty cases nationwide and was a principal drafter of pro-life and pro-family legislation for many states and municipalities. In 2008, Johnson was appointed to the Louisiana Commission on Marriage and Family by Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal. He is a member of the Louisiana Bar and has been admitted *pro hac vice* to many federal district and appellate courts across the country. Johnson earned his J.D. from Louisiana State University.

ABOUT Brett Harvey

Brett Harvey serves as senior counsel with the Alliance Defense Fund at its headquarters in Scottsdale, Arizona. Harvey has assisted state and local governments on issues involving public invocations, and he has successfully represented clients defending First Amendment rights, as well as the right to life. He earned his J.D. from the Walter F. George School of Law at Mercer University in Georgia and is admitted to the bar in the states of Georgia, Florida, Colorado, and Arizona. Harvey has also been admitted to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit, and the U.S. District Court in Colorado. He joined ADF in 2000 and has been practicing law since 1995.

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